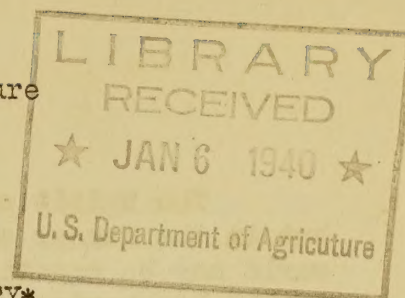


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4-H PREPARES FOR LIVING IN A DEMOCRACY\*

By

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Each year, in these United States, there are well over one million rural girls and boys who repeat this pledge with a deep sincerity of purpose:

"I pledge

My Head to clearer thinking,  
My Heart to greater loyalty,  
My Hands to larger service, and  
My Health to better living, for  
My Club, my Community, and my Country."

These girls and boys are members of the 4-H Clubs. The philosophy of this organization is to aid rural young people to prepare themselves to accept the challenge of rich, abundant, and democratic living in their homes, their communities, and their country.

I was an active member of 4-H for 10 years and then a member of the campus 4-H Club at my land-grant college. After graduation I took up my work as a member of the extension service working with 4-H girls in a county, and just 3 weeks ago began my new activities as assistant State 4-H leader in Iowa. Through these years of close association with 4-H I feel I have had an opportunity to experience the value which this educational movement can mean in the life of a young person. Just to say these are values I received from 4-H would be of little consequence in itself, but multiply my added richness in living by the million or more members enrolled each year, and you realize the vital educational contribution of the 4-H movement to the rural community.

When we lay a finger on a pulse at wrist or temple, we realize that we are merely feeling the symbol of a throbbing heart within. Studying last year on a 4-H fellowship in our Nation's Capital gave me a wonderful opportunity to see the outward machinery of a democracy at work - to feel its pulse, as it were. But I thought again and again that the throbbing heart of that democracy lay in the individual homes of our Nation, and in the beliefs and longings and ideals of each family member.

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The spirit of democracy is evidenced not only in the things we do, but in the manner each of us thinks and feels toward his world. That world may be constituted by his 160-acre farm bounded by the line fence; or, as his horizon and his vision broaden, it may include far lands he has never seen. But "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," and thus his actions and the institutions that are the product of his effort are merely reflections of what he thinks and feels within his heart.

There are certain qualities which each individual must possess in order to be a valuable and a happy participant in the democracy of a home, a community, or a nation.

I believe it is necessary for each individual member of a democracy to develop within himself a genuine love for the work he has to do each day. The 4-H Club program dignifies the work of the hands and helps the youth to find joy in a task well done. 4-H members learn to do by doing. It made me proud of homemaking as a profession. It helped me to accept my share of responsibility in my farm home and farm community.

4-H girls set high standards of workmanship and strive to be worthy members of families. They learn to find adventure in the homely tasks they must do if they accept their responsibility. They find romance in lovely colors and add beauty to their homes through a study of fundamental art principles. They analyze their own clothing needs and study buying, construction, and grooming. They not only learn scientific methods of food preparation, but study nutrition as well, thus raising health standards in rural areas. They concern themselves with efficient management of time, money, and energy. They study this business of being a member of a family. 4-H girls are proud to wear garments they have made. I know of nothing that gives me greater satisfaction than baking tempting loaves of whole-wheat bread for my family.

4-H boys, through their projects on the farm, develop similar satisfactions in work well done. To learn the techniques of doing a job well is important, but equally essential is the need to love the work one does. This is the way to find the challenge to give of one's best each day. And it is one of the safest insurances against the restless, revengeful dissatisfaction, which, if prevalent among a group of workers, becomes a menace to the democratic ideal. 4-H helped me to find joy in everyday living, and it is in this way that the organization is contributing to a wholesome attitude toward work and the daily task at hand.

In a democracy I believe it is imperative that individuals have a spirit of tolerance for the thoughts, desires, and innate yearnings of their fellow beings. This tolerance - this respect for human personalities, must begin with mother and father, brothers and sisters in the home, and extend to embrace all fellow beings. Cooperation is one of the keynotes of 4-H Club work. It begins in the homes where families work out their problems together, learning that fundamental "give and take" which makes cooperation possible. 4-H projects are planned and discussed, needs of all



the members are taken into consideration, and the final workable plan is the result of cooperative effort. This cooperation I learned in my home through 4-H work carried over into my association with my neighbors, with other young people throughout my State, and was a real benefit in college and in my job.

It is not that farm people desire less to know how other live, but because they are scattered and must of necessity be more or less independent, it is difficult for them to know of other ways of life. My 4-H experience broadened my vision and made possible contacts which enlarged my world. And in direct proportion to the increase of knowledge and appreciation of an enlarging world, can there be an increasing tolerance. 4-H Clubs in my State are engaged in a "world-conscious" program. Through panel discussions, exhibits, and talks, 4-H members learn more of the ways in which other countries contribute to our standard of living. They find a deeper appreciation for the art and music and tradition of other lands. The very fact that all over the Nation 4-H Clubs are stressing the discussion method as a means of talking over their problems is an indication of how tolerance is being developed. 4-H girls in Iowa have made panel discussions a part of their local, county, and State programs, and are attending training schools to learn discussion techniques. In June, at their annual State-wide convention, they chose as their theme, A 4-H Girl Looks at a Democracy.

Tours and educational trips help club members to get a better understanding not only of how people live in other rural areas, but of the city way of life as well. Speakers on county and State-wide programs open many interesting doors to seeking 4-H eyes as the arts, sciences, industries, and professions are introduced to them. As a result of my 4-H experiences, I think of how wide has grown the boundary of my 160-acre farm home. May my tolerance and my understanding of my fellow men deepen as that boundary expands!

Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron told us yesterday that self-expression was the highest privilege and the most solemn obligation of the members of a democracy. I had listed as a third necessity of a democracy that opportunity for self-expression. 4-H gave to me this opportunity in so many delightful ways. Through the perfecting of certain skills it gives to members an opportunity to give of themselves through their daily work. Club meetings and parties, rally days and conferences all help to furnish opportunities for members to participate in social activities and thus express themselves in a social way. The organization is doing a great deal to encourage self-expression in cultural ways. One of the outstanding activities is in the field of music. 4-H members sing in large groups and small just for the pure joy of singing. They listen, enjoying alike opera and simple folk tunes, symphonies and marching songs, because they know the background which makes the music live for them. They dramatize through festival and pageant, opera and living pictures, sharing with their communities their heritage of song. They give rhythmic expression in the form of folk dances and games. Whole families participate in these music activities, and what a joy and sense of well-being it has brought into many homes and communities. Each year the heart of rural Iowa finds expression in song, one high-light year presenting the opera The Bohemian Girl, with an all-rural



cast from 71 counties. Short adaptations of the opera were given in hundreds of local communities. I returned to my local club campfire meeting a few weeks ago to find mothers and dads joining with their 4-H sons and daughters in calling for the Osebogar - that happy Gypsy dance which they had played in the Bohemian Girl. And there we all danced that lively game, reminiscent of nights when we performed in opera.

Radio is utilized to carry the music story. What a thrill it gave me a few summers ago to watch whole families gather around the living-room radio, song sheets in hand, ready for the opening note from the accompanist in the broadcasting station. With this was the director of the State-wide rural chorus and a small group whom he would lead in the songs we all knew and loved. After giving his instructions we would all await the moment when we would join with other unseen choruses throughout the State in singing beautiful melodies. The music program is one which has grown through the years, and one of the most cherished phases of 4-H work in certain sections because it gives hearts a chance to sing - hearts of farm people whose hands are used to hard labor.

Another value I received from 4-H, and one which I believe is vital to the maintenance of a democracy, is a deep appreciation for rural life and a faith in the rural ideal. 4-H members learn to find beauty in their surroundings, opening eyes to the glories of nature and her works. They develop a deep appreciation of rural people and an understanding of their problems.

As an outgrowth of all these values there naturally develops a spirit of service fundamental to a democracy. 4-H gave me enough of that feeling of security and poise and self-confidence to give me inner peace, but simultaneously came the desire to grow and to give. I think of the last lines of Untermeyer's "Prayer" -

"And when at last the fight is won,  
God, keep me still unsatisfied."

Not dissatisfied with the things we already possess, but ever seeking to enrich the lives, not only of those who love the soil, but the lives of all we call fellow men. 4-H made me want to contribute my part to making the farm home and the farm community a mecca of real living.

It helped me to see that the achieving of a democracy of home or nation is not the ultimate end in itself, but that the responsibility for its maintenance rests as much upon my actions and thoughts and ideals as upon those of each member of society.

It gives me strength and courage to know that all over this Nation 4-H is making rural girls and boys humbly grateful for the fact that instead of a marching song full of hate and unhappiness, they can sing of their land -

Oh beautiful for spacious skies,  
For amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountain majesties  
Above the fruited plain.  
America! America!  
God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea.



